

*Adapted from: Taking Your Place in the Professional Community - A Handbook for Beginning Teachers by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation*

**From: [Survive and Thrive Web Site](#)**

### **Where can I find support for students with special learning needs?**

An inclusive classroom is one where individual differences are seen as a source of richness, possibility and creative energy. This contrasts to the kind of environment where differences lead people to be perceived as “other” and “separate”. As you consider the diversity in your classroom, you will want to draw on the support systems that exist in your school, your division and your community. Consider how these supports might work for you, and how you can connect with them from your school.

#### **Key People**

[Resource Teachers – IEP](#)

[Teacher Librarians](#)

[Teaching Assistants](#)

[Educational Psychologists](#)

[Counsellors](#)

[Speech Pathologists](#)

[Social Workers](#)

#### **Resource Teachers or Learning Assistance Teachers**

Resource teachers support classroom teachers in programming appropriately for students with particular needs that relate to learning. In some divisions, resource teachers have responsibilities for students who are referred to them because of delays in some academic area (or in some divisions, resource teachers take some responsibility for gifted learners). These may be students who have learning disabilities, attentional problems, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effect (FAS or FAE), or there may be an unexplained or poorly understood delay. Some resource teachers pull students out of the regular classroom for extra instruction, and some work with the teacher in the classroom. Your division may use a model that differs from these options, so be sure to ask your mentor or your principal to explain it to you.

Resource teachers are also instrumental in the construction of an “I.E.P”, or Individualized Education Plan. If you have a student in your classroom that has been designated as having special needs, you and the resource teacher will collaborate to complete an I.E.P for that student. Be sure to check with your principal about how you might benefit from the support of a resource teacher.

#### **Teacher Librarians**

Teacher librarians are indispensable in assisting with planning for a diverse student population. Ask for their assistance when planning to include culturally diverse learning materials, or to provide materials that address your topic but reflect a range of reading abilities.

### **Teacher Assistants**

Teacher assistants are paraprofessional staff who are hired to support the teacher in special situations. Typically, a teacher assistant (or “educational assistant”, or “teacher aide”) is hired to assist a teacher in delivering an appropriate program to a student with special emotional, behavioral, intellectual or physical needs. Teacher assistants are placed according to policies that are determined at a local basis. Not every child with a special learning need will have a teacher assistant assigned to him or to her. Ask your principal to clarify how the placement of teacher assistants is determined.

Teacher assistants are not professional staff, and will take direction from teachers about the programming needs of the child. If you are going to work with a teacher assistant, then you will need to clarify how the work of the assistant will be monitored. You will want to create clear communication between the teacher assistant, the student, parents or guardians and you administrative team to carry out the program for the child as directed on the I.E.P. Although working with a teacher assistant seems complex, you will benefit from the insights that a skillful assistant has, and you will appreciate the ways in which she or he can add to an atmosphere of acceptance in the classroom.

### **Educational Psychologists**

Educational psychologists (or “ed-psychs”) are helpful in making assessments as to any behavioral and academic needs that students might have. They can provide information through testing and interviews, and can make helpful suggestions about strategies that might relate to student needs. Gifted learners, students with attentional difficulties, or students who display delays in learning might benefit from an educational psychologist’s intervention. Be sure to refer to the student’s cumulative folder to find out what services may have been obtained, and then consult with your principal about how to proceed if you feel that an educational psychologist can benefit your work with the student.

### **Counsellors**

Counsellors are helpful at assisting teachers with students who are experiencing emotional or social struggles. They can:

- be involved directly with the student in counselling sessions,
- assist the teacher in promoting social skills training,
- work with small groups of students in training sessions,
- help to coordinate other community supports,
- teach problem-solving skills to classes.

### **Speech/Language Pathologists**

Students may benefit from the intervention of a speech/language pathologist if they are experiencing difficulties in any aspect of language development, with the possible exception of English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Speech/language pathologists are available to:

- consult with teachers about strategies that support students with language difficulties,
- provide an assessment of children’s communication skills through observation and testing,

- consult with parents.

### **Social Workers**

Social workers may become involved with a student to support concerns that you may have about a student with regard to:

- chronic attendance problems,
- suspected abuse or neglect,
- crisis situations like unexpected death, suicide, family violence,
- access to community support systems,

Be sure that you ask your principal to explain your school's "protocol" (i.e. when/whom to call, how to document incidents, etc.).

An inclusive classroom is one where individual differences are seen as a source of richness, possibility and creative energy. This contrasts to the kind of environment where differences lead people to be perceived as "other" and "separate".

Be sure to explore options for special needs students. Inquire about how funding might be used, about the allocation of equipment and the appointment of para-professional support.